



giant water bug

representative species

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Arthropoda
Class:	Insecta
Order:	Hemiptera
Family:	Belostomatidae

Features

The giant water bug undergoes incomplete metamorphosis (egg, nymph, adult). It is the largest of the tree bugs and may grow to three inches long. The flat, oval body is brown or green. The front legs are adapted for grabbing prey while the hind legs are flattened as swimming paddles. The front wings are hard at the base and membranous (thin, pliable) at the tip. The hind wings are membranous and shorter than the front wings. The mouthparts are for sucking. It breathes with tubes that can be extended from the abdomen to the water's surface.

Natural History

The giant water bug lives in ponds and streams. It injects enzymes into its prey to dissolve the insides, then it sucks out the contents. This method of feeding allows this insect to eat large animals like frogs, insects, tadpoles, and fish. It is excellent at swimming and flying. It may be seen at night flying around lights. It can inflict a painful bite if picked up. In one group of giant water bugs the fertilized eggs are deposited by

the female on the back of the male. The male carries the eggs for about a week until they hatch. Some males have been known to care for the nymphs. In another group of giant water bugs the female lays eggs on aquatic vegetation.

Habitats

Mississippi River; Missouri River; interior rivers and streams; natural lakes and prairie marshes; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.